

the United States to take the necessary steps to ensure that 2006 is a year of significant transition to full Iraqi sovereignty.

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There is a broad consensus among experts here and abroad that Iraq's future will be determined politically and not by force. The formation of a permanent Iraqi government, one that will have power, legitimacy and vision, to assume primary responsibility for securing and governing the country is a necessary precondition to ending the insurgency, preventing civil war and allowing large scale reconstruction to begin.

Consequently, our role in Iraq must become more political and less military for if there is one thing that Iraqis of every religious, political and ethnic stripe can agree on, it is that they do not want foreign troops in their country indefinitely.

The second element of the Democratic Real Security plan for Iraq is a responsible redeployment of our troops during the course of 2006 so that we are not drawn into sectarian conflict, and so that Iraqis are forced to take primary responsibility for securing and governing their country. The process of training Iraqi security forces has gone more slowly than many had hoped and few Iraqi units are capable of taking a leading role in combating the insurgency and remain almost wholly dependent on coalition forces for logistical support.

We must redouble our efforts to train Iraqi forces in order to allow for the responsible redeployment of American troops without a consequent loss of security in the areas we leave. A responsible redeployment of American coalition forces will have to be done in stages to build greater Iraqi sovereignty and control over security, not civil war.

In the first phase of redeployment, I believe our forces should be gradually withdrawn from urban centers where their mere presence in large numbers has earned the animosity of the local population. Our troops should be moved to smaller cities where reconstruction is supported by the local population and to remote bases where our troops will be able to support Iraqi units if necessary but will not become a buffer between warring sects bent on killing each other.

Over time, these troops will be withdrawn from Iraq altogether and redeployed outside the country, either in the region or back to the United States. We should publicly declare that the U.S. does not seek to maintain a permanent military presence in Iraq and many of us have co-sponsored legislation to prevent the establishment of bases which can only serve as a catalyst for the insurgency and for foreign jihadis.

A redeployment of American troops cannot succeed if the Iraqis themselves are not willing to find the political so-

lution to counter the forces that threaten the unity of the country. There is to doubt that Iraq's ongoing sectarian strife has been exacerbated by the protracted struggle among and inside Iraq's political factions over the formation of a permanent government.

The real key to a better future for the Iraqi people and the third element of the Democratic Real Security plan for Iraq is the promotion of political compromise to unite the country. The recent formation of a national unity government by the prime minister is a positive step. While Zarqawi's death has grabbed most of the headlines today, the prime minister's announcement that he has filled the crucial vacancies in the interior defense and national security ministries may prove more important to Iraq's future, which will be determined politically and not by force.

The Iraqi government must demonstrate to its people that it can actually bring Iraq's rival factions together in a common effort to confront the foreign jihadis and bring the insurgents into the political process. This is the best hope for maintaining the unity of Iraq. But Mr. Speaker, we can not do it alone.

American soldiers, American diplomats and American reconstruction experts are shouldering almost the entire burden in Iraq. This is unfortunately a problem wholly of our making. The President made little effort to bring others on board before we went into Iraq. And after the fall of Baghdad, he rebutted an offer by the United Nations to assume a central role in rebuilding the country.

Finding a way to internationalize the struggle to stabilize Iraq is the fourth element of the Democratic Real Security plan for Iraq. It is not surprising our allies and others are reluctant to send their soldiers and contractors to help us. It is dangerous and we have not been amenable to listening to the suggestions of others. Unfortunately, the situation in Iraq has deteriorated to the extent that the world must re-engage if only because the alternative is too horrible to contemplate. At a minimum, our allies should be willing to assume a greater role in training Iraqi security forces, as well as provide long-promised economic support.

Finally, the last element of the Real Security plan is the need to hold the administration accountable for its conduct of the war. More than any other variable under the control of Congress, our failure to perform this oversight has been a major factor contributing to the difficult situation in Iraq.

The failure of oversight and the need to hold accountable people that are responsible for those failures has plagued the Iraq war from the beginning. And because this Congress, this Republican-controlled Congress refuses to hold the President to account, we keep making the same mistakes over and over again.

For years, the administration and majority tried to cow into silence any-

one who dared to question the conduct of the war by calling them unpatriotic. It is not disloyal to ask these questions. Oversight is a core responsibility of Congress. The great strength of a democratic system with built-in checks and balances is that mistakes are caught and corrected. Every Member of this House, Republican and Democrat, wants a stable and representative Iraqi government. But, Mr. Speaker, we cannot hope to change course in Iraq until and unless we are willing to acknowledge mistakes, until we hold the administration accountable and force change.

Devising and implementing a successful end game in Iraq will be difficult, but the President's open ended commitment to remain in the country is untenable and unwise. The American people want Iraq to succeed and for a representative government there to survive and lead to a better future for the Iraqi people, but that success requires a new direction.

I now yield to two of my colleagues, my fellow co-chairs of the Democratic Study Group on National Security their thoughts on the way forward in Iraq. First, I would like to turn to Mr. ISRAEL of New York who has been a great leader on this issue, who is the Chair of the Democratic Task Force on National Security. I yield to the gentleman from New York.

Mr. ISRAEL. I thank my friend from California and particularly I want to thank him for his strong and wise leadership on national security issues.

As the gentleman mentioned he and our colleague from Atlanta, Georgia, Mr. SCOTT, and I co-founded the Democratic Study Group on National Security Policy, which advocates for a long and smart military, which believes in policy that are robust and visionary when it comes to our national security.

I have the great honor, not just being a Member of Congress, but serving on the House Armed Services Committee. And I was in Iraq just a month ago. It was my second visit as a member of the Armed Services Committee. And when I was there I had the sense that we were getting close to finding al-Zarqawi. He was still on the loose but we were getting closer, and I am glad that we finished the job. This is a guy who relished beheadings. This is someone who enjoyed car bombings. This is someone who killed Americans who killed, Sunnis, who killed Shi'ia, who killed Kurds. And so I believe it is an important day and it is good news that while we have many struggles ahead this one struggle no longer exists.

But I think it is very important for us to focus on the future. While I was in Iraq I had the opportunity to meet with Prime Minister Maliki and President Talabani and General Casey and his troops. All of those people were involved and should take credit for what happened today.

The questioning now faces what is next. The gentleman talked about our plan for Iraq. The fact that 2006 should